

MODERN CRITICISM

IV
Ileprise tous ces droles; a quoi bon
s'inquieter de ce
que ces merles piaillent? C'est perdre son
temps que de
lire des' critiques. Je me fais fort de soutenir
dans une
these qu'il n'y en a pas eu une de bonne
depuis qu'on
en fait, que ça ne sert a rien qu'a embeter
les auteurs
et a abrutir le public, et enfin qu'on fait de
la critique
quand on ne peut pas faire de l'Art, de
meme qu'on se
met mouchard quand on ne peut pas etre
soldat. Je
voudrais bien savoir ce que les poetes de
tout temps out
eu de commun dans leurs oeuvres avec ceux
qui en ont
fait l'analyse! Plaute aurait ri d'Aristote s'il
l'avait connu!
Corneille se debattait sous lui! Voltaire,
malgre lui, a
ete retreci par Boileauf So much (and a
good deal
more) Flaubert found to say on the subject
of criticism
in general; while poor Louise Colet, reading
his letter,
doubtless drummed with her fingers on the
table and
wished, for the thousandth time, that her
strange lover
had a litde more love in him and a little less
hate. So,
for generation after generation, the great
writers have
raged or laughed at the futility of critics:
while the
critics—why, they, for their part, remain as
unabashed
by such outbursts as a swarm of flies by an
exasperated
wave of the hand. They simply return to the
attack and
buzz about their victims as affectionately as

before. It is surely a very odd situation. The creative writers despise the critics; and the critics, showing (in this respect, at least) a more than Christian meekness, repay this contempt with praises and loving studies of the writers; once the writers are dead, particularly. They take no trouble to defend themselves. That would be too superfluous. At most they may hint modestly in passing that